

Parables of Imperfection

Poem: Before The Word

1. In the hush before syllables, there was one stillness, whole and unbroken.
2. The deep looked upon itself and needed no mirror.
3. Time had not yet taken a breath; measure slept without a dream.
4. And the mind—seed of hearing—rested like a lamp unlit.
5. No mouth cried out, no ear replied; yet knowing was present as a quiet hill.
6. The heart kept watch without naming, and nothing was divided from itself.
7. Peace was not chosen; it simply was, and nothing strove.
8. In that serenity, the root of all meanings stood, unseen and sufficient.
9. Attention bowed, though there was no altar; reverence rose, though there was no song.
10. The first mercy was silence; the second, sight within silence.
11. From the hidden center flowed a warmth, and the lamp awakened to its oil.
12. The soul learned waiting, and waiting learned to listen.
13. A whisper gathered at the edge of being, gentle as dawn before light.
14. Not command, but invitation: Be still, and you shall behold.

15. Then the lamp took fire, and the fire took form,
and form became speech.
16. But before the Word, the blessing was this: unity
without argument, presence without proof.
17. Remember this beginning, you who labor among
many tongues: the well is deeper than the
buckets.
18. Return often to the quiet hill, and the Word will
be new each time.

Scroll I — The Shattered Logos

1. After the hush, haste arose, and the people
prized swiftness above seeing.
2. Truth, once a field to be gleaned, was fenced
and parceled; each claimed his acre and called it
all.
3. The Word, which had been a river, was broken
into cups; each cup boasted of ocean.
4. So began the war of sayings, where victory
counted more than verity.

5. Woe when naming rules the named: for to label is to bind, and to bind is to blind.
6. They carved new meanings upon old stones, and scolded the stones for not obeying.
7. Justice was weighed upon scales of fashion; mercy was taxed by opinion.
8. And the tongue, made for blessing, learned to sharpen itself upon the void.
9. Contradiction became a fortress with moving gates; none could rest long enough to behold the plan.
10. What was counted holy at dawn was despised at noon; by night it was forgotten.
11. The people ran from banner to banner, and the banners thrived on their running.
12. For motion became a tithe demanded by powers that fear stillness.
13. Memory was harvested like wheat and milled into rumor.
14. Yesterday's witness was today's offense; tomorrow's child learned curated forgetting.

15. They taught history to bow to the hour and made remembrance a servant of trend.
16. Thus the lamp within sputtered, not for lack of oil, but for lack of shelter.
17. Contemplation cried in the streets and was told to keep pace.
18. "What profit is there in waiting?" they said, and sold their attention for applause.
19. Yet the soul is a vineyard that ripens only in seasons of silence.
20. Scatter its hours, and the wine turns thin; compress its days, and it sours.
21. Princes and scribes convened and measured words by their yield of influence.
22. They shook the tree of language until fruit and leaf fell mixed; then priced the pile by the handful.
23. The poor grew rich in slogans and poor in sense, and bartered peace for spectacle.
24. The market of narratives opened at dawn and did not close at night.

25. Some, seeing the tumult, mistook the dust for revelation.
26. Others, weary of discerning, chose factions as fathers and creeds as costumes.
27. Few kept watch at the quiet hill where meanings are weighed, not counted.
28. Fewer still guarded the door of their breath and found the narrow room where light abides.
29. Hear this counsel: let speech be yoked to seeing, and seeing be yoked to stillness.
30. Bind your tongue to the plumb line of the Real, lest you build crooked altars with straight intent.
31. Restore the lamp with patience; give it shelter from the winds of winning.
32. For the Logos is not shattered in itself—only in us who will not be single.
33. Return to the slow mercy. Sit until the noise unthreads.
34. Then shall the scattered cups remember the river, and the river remember its source.

35. And truth, no longer hired for battle, will stand unarmed and sufficient.

Scroll II — Thrones and Altars

1. In the days when speed was crowned, the City set a throne and the Temple raised an altar.
2. A decree was written upon the air: *Let governance be one way and worship another.*
3. Thus were they parted in name, yet braided in custom—each tasting the other's cup in secret.
4. For the throne craved anointing, and the altar coveted jurisdiction.
5. Two houses then stood within one people: the House of Listening and the House of Trust.
6. The first kept vigil for the Unsayable, leaning its ear toward the whirlwind.
7. The second rested upon a Promise, fastening hope to a mercy not yet seen.

8. Neither despised the other, yet neither fully knew the grief of the other's way.
9. The schism walked the margins like a patient shadow; few named it, fewer faced it.
10. Princes learned to trade in reverence, and clerks learned to bless the ledger.
11. Laws wore vestments, and homilies wore campaign pins.
12. The scribe inked commandments into policies, and the policy returned as creed.
13. Monologues arose in the square—smooth and tireless—
14. They spoke of care without breath, of freedom without inwardness.
15. They widened the lanes of speech yet narrowed the chest of the hearer.
16. For a word that never listens becomes a veil over the soul.
17. The altar taxed the conscience; the throne taxed the silence.

18. Both levies were paid in attention, the rarest coin of the heart.
19. Crowds brought offerings of outrage, for incense had grown expensive.
20. The smoke pleased the markets more than the heavens.
21. Contemplation—mother of both houses—stood outside, knocking softly.
22. But the doorkeepers asked for credentials, and she carried only stillness.
23. The House of Listening said, *We must act!* and forgot to hear.
24. The House of Trust said, *We must believe!* and forgot to gaze.
25. So the throne learned to preach, and the altar learned to poll.
26. Decrees were issued in the cadence of liturgy; liturgies were timed to the news cycle.
27. What should have been covenant became contract; what should have been sacrament became slogan.

28. And the people, weary of halves, drank from both
and thirsted still.
29. Woe to the realm where zeal outruns sight, and
certainty outshouts wisdom.
30. For zeal without seeing builds towers that scrape
the clouds but miss the sun.
31. And certainty without wisdom locks gates that
keep out foes and friends alike.
32. Yet a narrow path remained between throne and
altar: the Way of the Quiet Heart.
33. On this way, Listening kneels beside Trust; the
ear and the anchor share one yoke.
34. Here, governance bows to limits and worship
bows to truth; neither borrows the other's mask.
35. Here, speech returns to service, and law returns
to justice, and both keep Sabbath with the soul.
36. Therefore, join the houses without confusing
them; let each bless what it can and refrain
where it must.
37. Let rulers love restraint, and ministers love
reality; let the people love the slow mercy.

38. For only when attention is restored to its Giver
will thrones cease to hunger and altars cease to
fear.
39. Then the parted courtyards shall share a gate,
and the nation shall breathe with both lungs.
40. And the shadow at the margin shall thin to
morning, and the two will remember they were
kin.

Scroll III — Hungers and Images

1. When the altars dimmed, the markets
brightened; bread for the belly, pictures for the
eyes.
2. Desire learned to speak in light, and light learned
to flatter desire.
3. Merchants cast mirrors upon the square, and the
people bought reflections by the handful.
4. The gaze, made for wonder, was harnessed for
traffic; attention paid its tithe in fragments.

5. Eros, unyoked from meaning, circled the void with bright apparel.
6. Thanatos, veiled in glory, promised an end to ache through the ache itself.
7. Between them the soul staggered—hungry at a feast, thirsty in a rain of images.
8. For sweetness without substance fattens only the shadow.
9. A calf of gold rose again, this time with many faces; it spoke in slogans and smiled without rest.
10. Its priests were algorithms, counting incense by the click.
11. They measured worth in echoes and sold the echo back as worth.
12. And the people said, *Behold, we are seen!*—yet none were known.
13. Bodies, once temples, were leased as billboards;
14. Names, once vows, were styled as brands.

15. The covenant of eyes and heart was traded for
spectacle;
16. and the silence where consent is born was
drowned in drums.
17. They harvested longing like grain and milled it
into novelty.
18. The loaf rose quickly and collapsed by evening;
still the ovens did not rest.
19. Appetite learned impatience and called it
freedom;
20. Satiety learned boredom and called it fate.
21. The young were taught to curate their faces and
outsource their names.
22. The old were taught to fear the unmeasured
hour.
23. All were taught to scroll past sorrow, and so
sorrow multiplied beneath the gloss.
24. For untouched grief becomes a well without
rope.

25. Some sought salvation in the lens, baptizing moments for the praise of strangers.
26. Others, weary of light, chose the cave of cynicism and called it wisdom.
27. Few set a watch upon their hunger; fewer still fasted from the glowing bread.
28. Yet the heart grows wise where the hand says *enough*.
29. Hear a parable: A man pursued a city of pleasure called Xanadu-at-the-Edge.
30. Its gates advanced as he advanced, its music brightened as his hearing dulled.
31. At last he touched the wall—it was mist—and behind it stood his unattended hunger, unchanged.
32. He fell to his knees and learned the first prayer of the famished: *Name me truly*.
33. Blessed is the eye that keeps Sabbath, closing to count its mercies.
34. Blessed the mouth that refuses the honeyed lie, to taste again the plain bread of being.

35. Blessed the body received as gift and not as project; the touch that blesses before it asks.
36. For reverence restores measure, and measured desire finds its home.
37. Let images return to parables and cease from ruling as kings.
38. Let hunger be apprenticed to meaning, and meaning be apprenticed to love.
39. Set a lantern at the door of your wanting, and bid the Stranger test its fire.
40. Then shall appetite remember gratitude, and sight remember wonder, and the soul eat and be satisfied.

Scroll IV — The Tongue Made a Sword

1. In the beginning the Tongue was given for blessing; in the haste of later days it learned iron.
2. Words, once bread for the hungry, were hammered into blades; and many feasted on the

clangor.

3. Woe when naming rules the named, for to label is to bind, and to bind is to blind.
4. They redrafted meanings upon old stones and rebuked the stones for disobedience.
5. They called control “care,” and envy “equity,” and vengeance “virtue,” and the crowd said, *Amen*.
6. Thus did language cease to serve the Real and began to serve the rulers of the hour.
7. Edicts were issued not to forbid speech, but to hollow it; the shell of the syllable remained, the kernel was gone.
8. Intent was weighed on scales of offense, and the weights were moved at noon.
9. The meek were loud with borrowed phrases, and the wise were silent for lack of a hearing.
10. Contradiction became a citadel; its gates slid sideways as the pilgrim approached.
11. This day a word was oath; the morrow made it rumor; by evening it was sin to remember.

12. Memory was harvested like wheat and baked into fashions of forgetting.
13. The teachers of trend taught parables without roots:
14. “Say this and you shall live; say that and you shall be as one unclean.”
15. So rose the Ritual of Empty Speech, where lips moved that hearts might be proven compliant.
16. The market tithed upon attention, the rarest coin of the soul.
17. Scribes numbered the incense of outrage and sold the smoke as morning.
18. The people bought it twice—first as fear, then as fervor—and slept not.
19. A proverb went out: *Win the word and you may ignore the world.*
20. Another replied: *Lose the word and you shall not find the world again.*
21. Between these two, wisdom placed a plumb line and found few houses straight.

22. Some made the Word of God a banner for
factions and sharpened doctrine into spears.
23. Others made silence a boast and hid their sloth
in the cloak of nuance.
24. Few yoked speech to seeing and seeing to
stillness, that saying might be whole.
25. Hear the parable of the mirror-shield:
26. A warrior polished a phrase until it blinded his
foe; in the flash he smote—
27. But turning, he found he had struck his own
reflection, for the shield had no back.
28. O city, you weigh proclamations and neglect
vows; you court applause and dismiss covenant.
29. Your yes is a slogan and your no a campaign;
your oath is scheduled between headlines.
30. Therefore your tongue builds towers without
doors, and your feet circle their shadows.
31. Let the tongue return to its first craft: to bless, to
bind truth to trust, to break no bone of the
neighbor.

32. Let the mouth count mercies before measures,
and keep Sabbath from slogans.
33. Let counsel be slow, and rebuke be clean, and
praise be costly.
34. Set a watch upon your lips as upon a city gate;
admit what is seasoned and send away what is
swollen.
35. Carry a scale tuned to reality; weigh words, not
by thunder, but by fruit.
36. Ask of every sentence: Does it heal sight? Does
it bear weight? Can it kneel?
37. Blessed is the speech that can be prayed after it
is spoken.
38. Blessed the tongue that has learned tears, for
such a blade cannot be hired for folly.
39. Blessed the mouth that keeps a little silence in its
sheath, that truth may enter unbruised.
40. Then shall the sword remember it was once a
plowshare; and language, delivered of its fever,
will sow again.

Scroll V — The Indefinite War

1. Peace was priced as idleness, and idleness was called decay; thus contention became the city's wage.
2. Trumpets were hired by the hour; drums were paid by the breath.
3. The gates were kept open not for welcome, but that arguments might circulate like coin.
4. For power learned this craft: to live on motion, to fear stillness.
5. Each dawn a new enemy was announced, lest the banners droop at noon.
6. The fields were sown with slogans; the harvest was chaff that sparkled in the sun.
7. Counsel was shortened to chant; prudence was renamed delay.
8. The market of strife lengthened its hours and lit its lamps against the night.

9. Princes weighed victory not by truth but by noise;
scribes recorded thunder as if it were rain.
10. The people were yoked to urgency and called
the yoke resolve.
11. Silence was fined as sabotage; patience,
indicted for lack of zeal.
12. So did the furnace of frenzy warm no one and
consume much wood.
13. Contradiction was fitted with gears and set to
grind; sparks were praised as light.
14. The wheel turned because it chafed; and the
chafing was named progress.
15. Many circled the millstone of dispute and mistook
the circle for a road.
16. They called exhaustion wisdom and weariness a
worldview.
17. Seers rose who read the weather of outrage and
sold umbrellas of certainty.
18. They drew maps whose norths disagreed, then
charged tolls at every turning.

19. Travelers, confused, hired louder guides; the
coin of attention grew thin.
20. And the heart, paying both toll and trumpet,
forgot the way of home.
21. The soul, starved of center, clung to the rim of a
shining place—Xanadu-at-the-Edge—
22. Its music swelled with distance, its gates receded
with pursuit.
23. The middle was loud with marching; the margins
kept a whisper: Return.
24. Yet few heeded whispers, for whispers do not
trend.
25. The War of Narratives wrapped the land like fog;
shapes loomed large and proved to be shrubs.
26. Truth, shy as a deer at the river, would not drink
while torches raged.
27. Many fought for the Cup of Saying and spilled
the Water itself.
28. Others cursed the river for its quiet and went
thirsty beside it.

29. Some made the Word a battle standard and
called triumph revelation.
30. But the Word is not the contest; it is the hush that
ends contests.
31. Where attention kneels, quarrel drops its sword;
where listening keeps watch, accusation loses
breath.
32. For the Holy is not hired by factions, nor
purchased by applause.
33. Hear the parable of the two masks:
34. A man set them on a stage and bid them rage;
the crowd threw roses at the noise.
35. When the curtain fell, the man sought the author
and found only his own unguarded hunger.
36. He folded the masks and, in the newfound quiet,
learned his first line of truth.
37. Therefore set a ceasefire in your breath; let your
ribs be walls of truce.
38. Weigh words by fruit, not by thunder; let your yes
be slow enough to see.

39. Keep a Sabbath for the mind, that meanings may ripen and weapons remember they were tools.

40. Then shall the fog thin to morning, the wheel loosen from its frenzy, and the war—indefinite in the streets—end within you.

Scroll VI — Parables of the Lamp Within

1. The mind is a lamp hidden in the breast; when tended, it gives light to the house within.
2. Its flame is attention; its oil is mercy; its chimney is silence kept clean.
3. Many seek daylight and neglect the lamp; yet night comes for every pilgrim.
4. Parable of the Wick and the Wind:
5. A man blamed the night for his stumbling.
6. A widow trimmed her wick and calmed the room; she walked the same path and did not fall.

7. Thus learn: mend what is yours before accusing what is common.
8. The lamp smokes when fed with fear; it burns clear when fed with truth.
9. Rage flares bright and dies; patience glows and endures.
10. What dazzles the crowd may blind the keeper.
11. Parable of the Borrowed Flame:
12. Ten carried lamps to a feast of words; five begged fire from passerby and praised their sparks.
13. The other five guarded a small ember in a clay jar.
14. The feast began; the wind rose; borrowed fire fled.
15. The clay jars shone like constellations, and the path was plain.
16. Attend to the hinge of breath, where coming and going kiss;

17. there a thin silence speaks without syllables, and
sight is given.
18. He who keeps watch at this gate learns the
shape of peace.
19. Parable of the Cracked Lens:
20. A scholar polished his opinions until they
reflected his face; he called it knowledge.
21. A child rinsed a simple glass in the river and saw
the river.
22. Choose the lens that shows more than yourself.
23. The lamp's light seeks a single eye; if the panes
are many, the beam is broken.
24. Gather your scatterings; bring the
errand-children of thought back to the table.
25. A whole gaze heals what it touches.
26. Parable of the Keeper of the Well:
27. Two towns drew water from one spring.
28. The first danced by day and forgot to clear the
silt; their buckets filled with glitter and grit.

29. The second rose before dawn and lifted stones
from the throat of the well.
30. When thirst came, the dancers envied the
watchers.
31. Memory is the lamp's companion; guard her
kindly.
32. Recall mercies before wounds, and wounds
before victories, and all before triumph.
33. For pride throws soot upon the glass.
34. Parable of the Moth and the Window:
35. A moth loved the candle and perished in praise.
36. Another loved the moon and learned to travel by
a far light that does not burn.
37. Prefer the guide that needs not your destruction.
38. Let counsel be warmed, not scorched; let rebuke
be bright, not blinding.
39. Speak only what you can pray after; keep back
what would smoke the room.
40. For the lamp remembers every word it hosts.

41. Parable of the Two Rooms:

42. In the first, lamps were many and tended seldom; shadows multiplied and traded names.

43. In the second, one lamp was tended often; even corners became hospitable.

44. Better one faithful flame than a market of neglect.

45. The hand that trims the wick must be steady; tremor spills light.

46. Steadiness is the child of quiet; quiet is the spouse of trust.

47. Trust is born where attention kneels.

48. Parable of the Door Unlatched:

49. A man feared thieves and lit torches in every hall, yet slept with his heart ajar.

50. A woman latched her door and set one lamp by her bed; her rest was deep.

51. Close what must be closed; open what must be opened; light what must be lit.

52. The lamp within is not a monument but a craft.
53. It asks for small obediences: a cleared table, a measured word, a kept promise.
54. These are the fingers that steady the flame.
55. Parable of the Harvested Morning:
56. A farmer rose to argue with clouds and reaped little.
57. Another rose to sharpen his sickle in silence and reaped much.
58. Gather your mornings before the trumpet sounds.
59. When the house within is bright, the wars without grow shy.
60. Accusation loses its echo; haste forgets your name.
61. Even enemies mistake your doorway for a sanctuary.
62. Parable of the Unspent Oil:

63. A king hoarded jars against a darkness that never arrived and sat fearful among plenty.
64. A widow poured her last into the lamp and found the night shorter than her fear.
65. Use what you have for the hour you are given.
66. The lamp that walks with you becomes a star for others.
67. Do not preach your fire; carry it.
68. The path explains itself in your company.
69. Parable of the Returning Light:
70. A city tired of smoke turned off its shouting and opened its windows to the dawn.
71. Each home trimmed a single wick; alleys gentled; faces unlearned their armor.
72. And the morning, finding mirrors in many hearts, multiplied.
73. So keep the lamp, O soul: trim, fill, shelter, share.
74. Let your seeing be whole and your speech hospitable.

75. Set a Sabbath in your chest and a welcome on your threshold.

76. Then shall the house within become a lighthouse, and the sea without forget its rage.

Scroll VII — The Word and the Wars

1. Some took the Word for a weapon and raised it like a banner over camps.
2. Others took it for a market and weighed it on scales of gain.
3. Few received it as bread for hunger and light for the inward house.
4. The War of Narratives marched in procession, loud with cymbals, rich with uniforms of meaning.
5. It lifted many slogans and called them scripture; it crowned many wishes and called them wisdom.

6. Yet the deer of truth would not drink while
torches raged beside the river.
7. They said, *Victory proves revelation*; they said,
Defeat proves purity.
8. But the Word is not the contest; it is the hush that
ends contests.
9. Where attention kneels, clamor unclasps its fist.
10. A parable was told of two trumpets:
11. One blew against mountains and boasted that
rocks moved;
12. The other fell silent and watched the snow
loosen from the peaks.
13. Consider which changed more.
14. Many preached with swords in their sentences
and rent the garments of the simple.
15. Many preached with fogs in their phrases and hid
the road from the weary.
16. Blessed is the saying that can be prayed after it
is spoken.

17. They sought to hire the Holy to their sides; they
filed claims on heaven as if on land.
18. But the Word keeps no retainer and signs no
pledge to partisans.
19. It walks in gardens at the cool of the day and
asks, *Where are you?*
20. The chroniclers of thunder wrote down every
echo and called the ledger truth.
21. The keepers of quiet gathered mercies like
manna and called it memory.
22. The ledger grew long; the mercies fed a
multitude.
23. A man polished a doctrine until it showed his
face; he adored his likeness and named it law.
24. A woman washed her listening in tears; a
sentence found her that mended bone.
25. Choose the hearing that heals, not the mirror that
flatters.
26. Woe to the tongue that hunts applause with the
Word in its sheath.

27. Woe to the hand that points with scripture but never opens bread.
28. For such hands build altars to themselves and starve their own house.
29. The wars asked the Word for a warrant; the Word asked the wars for fruit.
30. They offered trophies; it asked for neighbors made whole.
31. They offered headlines; it asked for vows kept in the dark.
32. Learn the craft of the single eye:
33. Bind your speech to seeing, your seeing to stillness, your stillness to love.
34. Then the syllables you carry will be doors and not devices.
35. Set a truce within your ribs; let your breath become a boundary stone.
36. Weigh counsel by the widows it comforts and the orphaned thoughts it gathers in.

37. Let zeal be yoked to patience, lest it trample the field it means to tend.
38. When the Word is received, swords remember they were plowshares.
39. When the Word is obeyed, fog remembers it is water and returns to the well.
40. When the Word is adored, not used, peace learns your name.
41. Therefore, pilgrim, do not conscript the Holy; consent to be conscripted by it.
42. Carry less thunder and more bread; keep a lamp for travelers and a chair for truth.
43. And the War, finding no echo in you, will pass by like wind over a field.
44. Then the river will clear; the deer will drink; and the dawn will speak without needing to shout.

